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## TRAINING SCHOOL METHODS AND ORGANIZATION UNDER RELIGIOUS ORDERS\*

BY THE SISTERS OF MERCY, Chicago, Ill.

Let us glance backward at the state of society before the coming of the Redeemer. Idolatry and superstition, tyranny and oppression reigned everywhere. Vices were worshipped. The sweet consoling words of the Nazarene swept away these abominations and substituted a reign of truth, justice and mercy. What was the condition of the poor and unfortunate? They were treated with neglect and contempt as objects of malediction of the gods. Even among the most civilized pagans there was no attempt at any asylum or refuge for the destitute and suffering.

The world was shrouded in pagan darkness, until He came Who called Himself the Way, the Truth and the Life. He commanded His disciples to go forth and teach all nations the saving doctrine which He had taught them. They obeyed the command, they went forth and planted the seeds of Christianity with heroic courage, which often forced them to water the seed with their life blood. As this seed of Christian charity sprang up, simultaneously sprang up charitable institutions: hospitals and asylums for the sick, the destitute, the aged and the orphan.

In order to perpetuate these good works, societies and religious communities of men and women were organized. From the earliest days of Christianity monasteries and convents were soon filled with men and women. Often young girls devoted their lives to these good works. The founders of these institutions, knowing the necessity of a firmly-organized body, with the permission of the Head of the Christian Church, bound themselves by vow to observe the three Evangelical Counsels, to which they added a fourth vow, namely: the service of the poor, sick and ignorant. These communities may be traced back to the first century of Christianity.

Taking this view of the antiquity of religious orders we can readily see how these people cling to their early teachings and feel that if they took in seculars to do the work which they had vowed to do they would not be living up to the promise that they had made to God: to serve

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\* Written for the International Congress of Nurses at Cologne, but not read, as it was not received in time.

the poor, the sick and the ignorant. (The Sisters of Mercy make this fourth vow.) The religious orders which have been more recently founded, especially in Ireland and America, more readily adopt modern methods of nursing. The science of bacteriology has revolutionized surgery and has made possible things which thirty or forty years ago were considered impossible. We know that since germs have been proven to be the cause of disease scientists on both continents have been and still are working to discover the best means of overcoming the pernicious effects of these pathogenic germs.

In 1861, when the Sisters of Mercy at Dublin, Ireland, were about to open their first hospital, the "Mater Misericordia," which is, or was at that time, the largest in the British Isles, and was called the "Palace of the Poor," several Sisters of Mercy were sent to Kaiserswerth to learn the methods of nursing then taught there. Irish Sisters of Mercy were with Florence Nightingale during the Crimean War. Miss Nightingale wrote that the Sisters were her right hand, that they kept good order and preserved discipline wherever they were. Since 1861, most all workhouse hospitals in Ireland have been handed over to the Sisters of Mercy. The Government provides all necessities and pays the Sisters a salary, also furnishes private apartments for the Sisters and allows them a Chaplain.

The Sisters of Mercy Hospital, of Chicago, Ill., have studied the best theoretical works recommended by physicians and others familiar with the modern methods of nursing. They were anxious to acquire the best means of applying the theory to the practical work of the latest improved methods of caring for the sick, and also of conducting a training school for nurses. In order to secure the best they were advised to procure a thoroughly trained woman to take charge of the training school. They were fortunate in getting a woman who started the school on the right basis and laid the solid foundation on which the Sisters have continued to build. The Sisters have taken up every new idea and continued to advance step by step, as theory and science led the way.

The Sisters specialize or take up one kind of work. Some have the operating-room work. They have charge of the nurses employed in the operating rooms and teach them all things pertaining to surgical service. Other Sisters give X-ray treatments, make and mount skiagraphs. A Sister has charge of the surgical supply department, where nurses are taught to buy all surgical supplies, and also to prepare dressings for the different operations. Anæsthetics and everything needed for surgery are dispensed from this room. The pharmacy is

in charge of a registered pharmacist. She is the first woman who took the state board examination in the state of Illinois. All the medicines for the hospital are prepared by her and a Sister assistant. Another Sister has charge of the department of hydrotherapeutics and electrotherapeutics. There are also three Sister anæsthetists. The first one who specialized in this work has given 15,000 anæsthetics in twelve years and has never lost a patient from the effects of an anæsthetic. The pathological laboratory is also under the care of a Sister. Internes make examinations of the various pathological specimens. All is under the supervision of Professor Robert F. Zeit, of the Northwestern University.

The obstetrical department is also in charge of a Sister. There are two dressing rooms, septic and aseptic, each in charge of a Sister, one interne and a nurse, where about one hundred patients are dressed daily.

The superintendent of the training school is a graduate of Mercy Hospital training school, who, after having taken the training, became a member of the community. The assistant superintendent is also a graduate of the training school. The pupil nurses average one hundred. The training school is affiliated with the Northwestern University, the nurses receiving their diplomas with the other university students.

There are forty Sisters engaged in hospital work, twenty of whom are registered according to the laws of the state of Illinois for registration of nurses. Twenty-two classes and 350 nurses have been graduated.

The nurse who is trained in the knowledge of sterilization and disinfection is able to give the surgeon most efficient aid, and the patient more comfort and assurance of speedy restoration to health. Those religious orders which have been founded during the nineteenth century have taken kindly to modern methods of nursing. The older religious orders which have not adopted the training school for nurses, have not neglected to study the new methods and adopt new ideas in things pertaining to asepsis in surgery and nursing medical patients.

These religious organizations know that to preserve order and secure best results there must be one head, whom all obey, as on board a ship if every man could steer the vessel, confusion would cause shipwreck. To lead an army to victory, soldiers and officers must obey one commander. On their obedience depends success or defeat. Their obedience springs not from ignorance, but from a thorough course of instruction, and an intellectual conviction that unity of action is the sure road to success. This military obedience is carried out also in

training school work, not what some call "blind obedience," but eyes, head and hands trained to work in unison with a kind and sympathetic heart.

As a proof that Sisters all through the United States are making progress in modern methods of nursing, we may state that Sisters of Mercy and members of many other Sisterhoods come to the Mercy Hospital, Chicago, to learn its methods of hospital management and also how to conduct a training school. To all who come the Sisters freely extend a friendly helping hand and invite them to light their lamps from their torch, which only burns the brighter by shedding abroad its enlightening rays.

Let us, dear sisters of the nursing profession, rejoice in this that He has promised the Kingdom of Heaven to those who labor in His vineyard, for has He not said, "Whatsoever you did to the least of my brethren you did it unto me; therefore, enter into the joy of your Lord."

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### **EPIDEMIC CEREBRO-SPINAL MENINGITIS \***

By EMMA C. SLACK, R.N.,

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Epidemic cerebro-spinal meningitis is a disease of the meninges of the brain and spinal cord. It is an acute inflammation of the meninges due to infection with a specific micro-organism, the "diplococcus intracellularis."

The disease occurs sporadically and in epidemics. It manifests itself in distinct clinical forms; one form being more prevalent in certain epidemics, and another form in other epidemics, so that a description of one form would not give an adequate idea of the disease.

It is usually described as a disease of children and in some epidemics is confined mostly to children, but in other epidemics young adults are mostly affected. In our present epidemic in this city the great majority of cases have been young men between the ages of twenty and thirty-five. This was true also of the Boston epidemic in 1904.

As to the contagiousness of the disease, very little is known. Cases usually come from scattered localities, seldom is it confined to any certain part of the city. Seldom also is there more than one case in a household, but in some epidemics there have been two and even three

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\* Read before the University Hospital Alumnae Association and the Kansas City Graduate Nurses' Association.